

Transferring Education for Sustainability

Abdul Gafoor, K.,* & T.K.Umer Farooque , **

**presented in
UGC sponsored National Seminar**

On

Curricular Imperatives of Sustainability Science

4th & 5th October 2013

At

Farook Training College, Kozhikode, Kerala, India.

* Associate Professor, Dept. of Education, University of Calicut, Kerala.

**Assistant Professor, Farook Training College, Farook College PO, Calicut

Transferring Education for Sustainability

Sustainable learning as transferable learning

Sustainability, the term means maintaining without degradation, conserving without harm, preserving for the future. Sustainability science thus implies knowledge that helps maintain and extend human wellbeing in its broad sense. Any knowledge that, if learnt, purports to enlarge human interests in its own must be sustainable. The knowledge that helps beyond the time and context of its learning is referred to as transfer of learning. Transfer is the heart of any educational system, because all educational efforts aims and expects that what is being taught and learnt will find useful and applicable for the learner later in the life.

A sustainable education is an education that ensures transfer of what is learnt. Only a sustainable learning is real learning, a learning that transfers to the life around. Sustainability, whether of life or learning, results from adaptability.

Learning is sustainable, transferable, only if it is learned in a living way. This further testifies that there is no need, neither any requirement, for a separate system of learning and education of sustainability science. A transferable, and hence real, education is sustainable learning and education.

Qualities of a sustainable and transferable education

Dynamism of learning

Any learning to be transferable, and hence supportive of sustenance, needs to result from living experiences. A dynamic learning should make the learner dynamic and active. Learning should energize the learner rather than lazy and lethargic. changing - learning process, learning medium according to the learner and learner context. Flexible- learning needs to be such that it facilitates application in multiple contexts. Responsive- real education need be responsive to the learner and contextual needs. Functional – it should be helpful at least with one of the essential requirements of life like food, safety, health and peace.

Adaptability of learning

Only a living organism can adapt to its environment. In the same vein, only a living educational system will help the learner to gain adaptable knowledge; only a living education can be sustainable. In the opposite vein, an education system which in itself is not sustainable cannot impart sustainability neither in the learners nor in the society.

Complexity

A really sustainable learning needs to incorporate life in its totality. It should help to understand the environment and the problems faced by life in its totality. It should not break

down and treat life from the perspective of single discipline. Learning should encourage seeking answers to questions in an insightful way applying higher order thinking skills. Learning should not restrict itself to single domains but treat learner as a whole including affective, volitional and cognitive aspects. Learning needs to take many forms without restricting itself to any of the traditional or seemingly modern means.

Suggested ways and means of transferable and hence sustainable learning

On aims of education

Integrate long term goals and specific and immediate goals of learning. Ensure that in our effort to make learning more effective, outcome oriented and scientific, long term and broader goals are not neglected or taken for granted.

Beyond focusing learning of facts, concepts, procedures and learning to learn, emphasize development of a generation of learners who learn about learning and who are able to come up with knowledge structures that better address human problems.

Equip learners with broad set of experiences that will find useful for them irrespective of the nature of the immediate problem at hand and enable them to see the problem in the environments from multiple perspectives

On content of education

Amalgamate knowledge created by different disciplines from the perspective of life than breaking the knowledge down into meaningless and lifeless subject matter for the sake of instantaneous benefits. Check every concept, theory and practice that is being taught for the relevance to human welfare and sustainability.

Couple science, social science, humanities such that scientific knowledge is developed in tandem with the development of conscience

Bridge the gap between the school and life, provide Experience with the daily living problems and anchor learning in meaningful contexts.

On methods of education

Let methods emerge from learners and learning situation than the methods and procedures dictating what is to be taught, how something is to be taught and for what ends.

Use active, participatory and collaborative approaches that are in tune with peaceful coexistence of human society and its context. Remember that scientific method, its investigation strategies and group problem-solving techniques constitute the most general, useful and hence transferable competencies for ensuring sustainability.

Encourage learning from case studies of human – environment interactions and their positive and negative impacts from around the globe.

When planning learning experiences for students, a core issue is what kinds of knowledge are taught and what kinds of knowledge are expected to transfer from specific content to other meaningful situation.

On the development of science of education

Encourage negotiation of extant theories and principles of educating such that more dynamic and adaptable educational practices are evolved.

Try modern models of teaching in their totality and avoid over using a few. Methods of integrating different models to deal with the complexity of life in classrooms have to be furthered.

Summing up

This paper argued that the core educational issue in ensuring a sustainable future for all is the problem of ensuring what is taught and learnt through the educational process. This calls for identifying and practicing newer and more efficient ways of treating life as the subject matter of learning in its optimum complexity ensuring adaptability and functionality of what is learnt. This in turn calls for changes in science and practice of education, right from aims, through methods and ways of treating its contents. Adulterating the education for narrow gains, watering down its content for drawing students to the institution, propping up students in the name of facilitation, oversimplifying the educational efforts for the sake of practicality make education unsustainable, futile and damaging for the individual, society and humanity.